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Supreme Court, U.S.  
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Supreme Court of the United States

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MILVERTHA PINNICK, GUARDIAN AND NEXT FRIEND OF  
MANNA PINNICK AND CORTLAND PINNICK, MINORS, AND  
JAMES BRADY, ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ESTATE OF  
MELISSA PINNICK, DECEASED, PETITIONERS

v.

CORBOY & DEMETRIO, P.C., A PROFESSIONAL  
CORPORATION, ROBERT J. BINGLE AND G. GRANT DIXON,  
III, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS AGENTS OF CORBOY &  
DEMETRIO, P.C.,

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*PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI  
TO THE SUPREME COURT OF  
THE STATE OF ILLINOIS*

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**PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI**

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## **QUESTIONS PRESENTED**

1. Are appellants in the Illinois appellate courts denied due process where one or more appellate judges hearing their appeal receive substantial contributions for their election campaigns directly from---and have close personal ties with---the opposing party, the appellee?
2. Do members of the Illinois judiciary who hear an appeal involving a party who makes substantial contributions to their election campaign---and with whom they have close personal ties---lose, or appear to lose, their ability to decide the appeal fairly and impartially so that recusal is required as a matter of due process?

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|  | Page      |
|--|-----------|
| QUESTIONS PRESENTED.....                                 | i         |
| TABLE OF AUTHORITIES.....                                | iii       |
| OPINIONS BELOW.....                                      | 1         |
| JURISDICTION .....                                       | 1         |
| RELEVANT PROVISIONS INVOLVED .....                       | 2         |
| STATEMENT .....  | 7         |
| REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION.....                   | 17        |
| CONCLUSION .....   | 31        |
| APPENDIX   |           |
| <i>Illinois Supreme Court Order.....</i>                 | <i>1a</i> |
| <i>Motion for Recusal of Supreme Court Justices.....</i> | <i>3a</i> |

## TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Page

## CASES

|   | Page       |
|---|------------|
| <b>AETNA LIFE INS. CO. v. LAVOIE</b> , 475 U.S. 813,<br>825(1986).....                | 22, 24     |
| <b>AMERICAN EXPORT LINES, INC. v. ALVEZ</b> , 446 U.S.<br>274, 278 N.7(1980).....     | 20         |
| <b>BRADY v. MARYLAND</b> , 373 U.S. 83, 85 N.1(1963) .....                            | 19, 21     |
| <b>CHAPMAN v. CALIFORNIA</b> , 405 U.S. 1020(1972) .....                              | 20         |
| <b>CLEVELAND BOARD OF EDUCATION v.<br/>LOUDERMILL</b> , 470 U.S. 532, 541(1985) ..... | 30         |
| <b>COHEN v. BENEFICIAL INDUS. LOAN CORP.</b> , 337 U.S.<br>541 (1949).....            | 20, 21     |
| <b>COLOMBO v. NEW YORK</b> , 405 U.S. 9, 10-11(1972) .....                            | 20         |
| <b>CONSTRUCTION LABORERS v. CURRY</b> , 371 U.S. 542,<br>549(1963).....               | 18, 20, 21 |
| <b>COX BROADCASTING CORP. v. COHN</b> , 420 U.S. 469,<br>479-482(1975).....           | 17, 18, 19 |
| <b>CRAWFORD v. UNITED STATES</b> , 212 U.S. 183,<br>196(1909).....                    | 23         |
| <b>DICKINSON v. PETROLEUM CONVERSION CORP.</b> , 338<br>U.S. 507, 511(1950).....      | 18         |
| <b>DUQUESNE LIGHT CO. v. BARASCH</b> , 488 U.S. 299, 306-<br>307(1989).....           | 19         |
| <b>FORT WAYNE BOOKS, INC. v. INDIANA</b> , 489 U.S. 46,<br>54(1989).....              | 17         |
| <b>GILLESPIE v. UNITED STATES STEEL CORP.</b> , 379<br>U.S. 148,152-153(1964) .....   | 18         |
| <b>HAMDI v. RUMSFELD</b> , 542 U.S. 507, 533(2004).....                               | 22, 30     |
| <b>HARRIS v. WASHINGTON</b> , 404 U.S. 55, 56(1971).....                              | 20         |
| <b>HELSTOSKI v. MEANOR</b> , 442 U.S. 500, 506(1979) .....                            | 20         |
| <b>IN RE MURCHISON</b> , 349 U.S. 133, 136 (1955) .....                               | 22, 27     |
| <b>JEFFERSON v. CITY OF TARRANT, ALA.</b> , 522 U.S. 75,<br>82-83 (1997).....         | 17         |
| <b>MATHEWS v. ELDRIDGE</b> , 424 U.S. 319, 334-335(1976).....                         | 30         |
| <b>MERCANTILE NATIONAL BANK v. LANGDEAU</b> , 371<br>U.S. 555, 558(1963).....         | 18         |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| MILLS V. ALABAMA, 384 U.S. 214, 217-218(1966) .....   | 19         |
| MISSISSIPPI POWER & LIGHT CO. V. MISSISSIPPI EX<br>REL. MOORE, 487 U.S. 354, 379 N.11(1988) ..... | 18         |
| MORRISSEY V. BREWER, 408 U.S. 471, 481(1972).....   | 30         |
| NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY V. SKOKIE, 432 U.S. 43,<br>44(1977).....                                 | 20         |
| OFFUTT V. UNITED STATES, 348 U.S. 11, 14(1954) .....  | 22         |
| PERLMAN V. FIRST NAT. BANK OF CHICAGO, 331<br>N.E.2D 65, 65(ILL.1975) .....                       | 29         |
| PHL, INC. V. PULLMAN BANK & TRUST COMPANY ET<br>AL., 721 N.E.2D 1119, 1120(ILL. 1999) .....       | 29         |
| QUERCIA V. UNITED STATES, 289 U.S. 466, 470(1933) ....  | 22, 27     |
| RADIO STATION WOW V. JOHNSON, 326 U.S. 120, 124-<br>127(1945) .....                               | 19, 21     |
| REPUBLICAN PARTY V. WHITE, 536 U.S. 765, 790<br>(2002).....                                       | 28         |
| TUMEY V. OHIO, 273 U.S. 510, 532(1927).....   | 22, 24     |
| UNITED STATES V. GENERAL MOTORS CORP., 323<br>U.S. 373, 377(1945).....                            | 21         |
| WARD V. VILL. OF MONROEVILLE, 409 U.S. 57, 61-62<br>(1972).....                                   | 22         |
| WITHROW V. LARKIN, 421 U.S. 35, 46-47(1975) .....   | 22, 23, 26 |

#### STATUTES

|                          |               |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| 28 U.S.C. § 455 .....    | 3             |
| 28 U.S.C. §§ 455(a)..... | 22, 23        |
| 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a)..... | <i>passim</i> |
| 28 U.S.C. § 1291 .....   | 4, 20         |
| ILCS 5/2-1001.....       | 5             |

#### RULES

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Illinois Code of Civil Procedure 735 .....    | 5, 26, 27  |
| Illinois Supreme Court Rule 63(C)(1) .....    | 23         |
| Illinois Supreme Court Rule 63(C)(1)(d) ..... | 13, 14, 15 |
| Illinois Supreme Court Rule 315 .....         | 12         |

## OPINIONS BELOW

The unpublished and unreported Order of the Illinois Supreme Court in *Milvertha Pinnick et al. v. Corboy & Demetrio, P.C. et al.* (Docket No. 107359), filed and decided on December 22, 2008, denying petitioners' Motion for Recusal of Supreme Court Justices Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 63(C) and dismissing as moot petitioners' Motion to Find Limitations of Appointment of Temporary Justices to the Illinois Supreme Court Unconstitutional, is set forth in the Appendix hereto(App. 1-2).

The unpublished Motion by petitioners for Recusal of Supreme Court Justices Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 63(C) and Motion to Find Limitations of Appointment of Temporary Justices to the Illinois Supreme Court Unconstitutional in *Milvertha Pinnick et al. v. Corboy & Demetrio, P.C. et al.* (Docket No. 107359), filed in the Illinois Supreme Court on November 24, 2008, is set forth in the Appendix hereto(App. 3-13).

## JURISDICTION

The decision of the Supreme Court of Illinois, the highest State court in Illinois in which a decision could be had, denying petitioners' Motion for Recusal of Supreme Court Justices Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 63(C) and dismissing as moot petitioners' Motion to Find Limitations of Appointment of Temporary Justices to the Illinois Supreme Court Unconstitutional, was decided and filed on December 22, 2008(App. 1-2).

This petition for writ of certiorari is filed within ninety (90) days of the date of the decision of the highest State court of Illinois in which a decision could be had on petitioners' motions, motions which specially claimed a right to due process under the federal Constitution, all consistent with the language of 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a).

The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a).

### **RELEVANT PROVISIONS INVOLVED**

*United States Constitution, Amendment XIV, § 1:*

...No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law....

*28 U.S.C. § 1257(a):*

Final judgments or decrees rendered by the highest court of a State in which a decision could be had, may be reviewed by the Supreme Court by writ of certiorari where the validity of a treaty or statute of the United States is drawn in question or where the validity of a statute of any State is drawn in question on the ground of its being repugnant to the Constitution, treaties, or laws of the United States, or where any title, right, privilege, or immunity is specially set up or claimed under the Constitution or the treaties or statutes of, or any commission held or

authority exercised under, the United States.

28 U.S.C. § 455:

(a) Any justice, judge, or magistrate judge of the United States shall disqualify himself in any proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned.

(b) He shall also disqualify himself in the following circumstances:

(1) Where he has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party, or personal knowledge of a disputed evidentiary facts concerning the proceeding;

....

(4) He knows that he, individually or as a fiduciary...has a financial interest in the subject matter in controversy or in a party to the proceeding, or any other interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome....;

....

(c) A judge should inform himself about his personal and fiduciary financial interests, and make a reasonable effort to inform himself about the personal financial interests of his spouse and minor children residing in the household.

(d) For the purposes of this section, the following words or phrases shall have the meaning indicated:

(1) "proceeding" includes ... appellate review"  
...;

....

(4) "financial interest" means ownership of a legal or equitable interest, however small....

*28 U.S.C. § 1291:*

The courts of appeals...shall have jurisdiction of appeals from all final decisions of the district courts of the United States....

*Illinois State Constitution, Article VI, § 3:***SUPREME COURT—ORGANIZATION**

The Supreme Court shall consist of seven judges. Three shall be selected from the First Judicial District, and one from each of the other Judicial Districts. Four Judges constitute a quorum and the concurrence of four is necessary for a decision. Supreme Court Judges shall select a Chief Justice from their number to serve for a term of three years.

*Illinois State Constitution, Article VI, § 16:***ADMINISTRATION**

General administrative and supervisory authority over all courts is vested in the Supreme Court and shall be exercised by the Chief Justice in accordance with its rules. The Supreme Court shall appoint an administrative director and staff, who shall serve at its pleasure, to assist the Chief Justice in its duties. The Supreme Court may assign a Judge temporarily to any court and an Associate Judge to serve temporarily as an Associate Judge on any Circuit Court. The Supreme Court shall provide by rule for expeditious and inexpensive appeals.

*Illinois Supreme Court Rule 63(C):**Disqualification.*

(1) A judge shall disqualify himself or herself in a proceeding in which the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned, including but not limited to instances where:

(a) the judge has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party or a party's lawyer, or personal knowledge of disputed evidentiary facts concerning the proceeding;

....

(d) the judge knows that he or she, individually or as a fiduciary, or the judge's spouse...or any other member of the judge's family residing in the judge's household, has an economic interest in the subject matter in controversy or in a party to the proceeding, or has any other more than *de minimis* interest that could be substantially affected by the proceeding; or

(e) the judge or the judge's spouse, or a person within the third degree of relationship to either of them, or the spouse of such person:

...

(iii) is known by the judge to have a more than *de minimis* interest that could be substantially affected by the proceeding....

*Illinois Code of Civil Procedure 735 ILCS 5/2-1001:***Sec. 2-1001. Substitution of judge.**

(a) A substitution of a judge in any civil action may be had in the following situations:

....

## (3) Substitution fo cause. When cause exists.

...

(iii) Upon the filing of a petition for substitution of judge for cause a hearing to determine whether the cause exists shall be conducted as soon as possible by a judge other than the judge named in the petition. The judge named in the petition need not certify but may submit an affidavit if the judge wishes. If the petition Is allowed, the case shall be assigned to a judge not named in the petition. If the petition is denied, the case shall be assigned back to a judge named in the petition.

*Illinois Senate Joint Resolution Constitutional  
Amendment 10 (SJRCA10):*

[proposing the following language as subsection  
(b) to Article VI, § 3]

(b) If a Supreme Court Judge recuses himself or herself in a particular case or matter before the Court because of an actual or potential conflict of interest, then the Judge shall notify the Clerk of the Supreme Court in writing of the recusal. A Judge of the Appellate Court shall then be selected to serve as an Interim Supreme Court Judge to hear that particular or matter until it is resolved or otherwise disposed of by the Court. The Interim Supreme Court Judge shall be selected in a random manner from a pool of Appellate Judges as determined by Supreme Court Rule.

## STATEMENT

In August of 1995, Johnny Waites rented a 1994 Mitsubishi *Diamante* station wagon from McFrugal Auto Rental in Atlanta, Georgia. The next day, Ms. Constance McNair and Ms. Melissa Pinnick ("Melissa"), cousins and both mothers, drove the vehicle from Atlanta to Joliet, Illinois, to visit members of their family. With them on the trip were four children including two of Melissa's young children, a daughter Manna, one and one-half years old, ("Manna") and a son Cortland, then six years of age ("Cortland") ("petitioners").

During the trip to Illinois, Melissa encountered trouble with the *Diamante* and she phoned Waites to tell him that the automobile was stalling and could only be restarted after several attempts. After arriving in Joliet, Melissa's father unsuccessfully attempted to determine the cause of the stalling problem or to have McFrugal replace the vehicle while in Joliet.

On August 17, 1995, Melissa and her cousin together with their children headed back to Atlanta in the *Diamante*. McNair was driving the vehicle and Melissa was in the front passenger seat with their children located in the backseat. At about 2:30 A.M., McNair was driving southbound on Interstate 65 in Indiana when she heard a noise, felt the left tire "shift" and then lost control of the car. According to McNair, the vehicle completely shut down—the car's lights went out and the brakes and steering did not work. The *Diamante* slid across the road out of control, then through the median separating the southbound from the northbound lanes of the Interstate and came to rest

in the passing lane of the northbound traffic lanes.

Without lights and with doors which would not unlock, frantically McNair tried unsuccessfully to restart the car. As she did so, a northbound Cadillac driven by James Dinsmore struck the disabled *Diamante*. The collision killed Melissa and critically injured her two children. Manna sustained a spinal cord injury and Cortland suffered traumatic psychological injuries, still endured today, as the result of waking up in the crushed automobile to see his deceased mother's head facing backwards.

In the aftermath of the accident, Melissa's father, Robert Pinnick, contacted an attorney and family friend, Vincent Cornelius, who recommended that the respondent Corboy & Demetrio, P.C.("the Firm") represent the Pinnick family. On August 30, 1995, Cornelius contacted the respondent Robert Bingle, Esq., the Firm's managing partner("Bingle"). Cornelius told Bingle that the *Diamante*'s owner, McFrugal Auto Rental in Atlanta, Georgia, was attempting to retrieve the damaged car which was being stored in an auto pound in Indiana.

On September 1, 1995, Bingle met with Robert Pinnick and Cornelius and told both of them that the Firm would obtain a court order to preserve the automobile in its present state (for the purpose of forensic analysis) and that he would have someone from the Firm investigate the vehicle. The Firm through Bingle then agreed to take the case; Pinnick executed three retainer agreements as the personal representative of the petitioner Estate of Melissa Pinnick and the next friend of both children Manna

Pinnick and Cortland Pinnick("petitioners").

On the facts as he knew them, Bingle apprehended the potential for several causes of action on behalf of petitioners: (1) an action against McFrugal Auto Rental in Atlanta for its negligent maintenance of the *Diamante*; (2) an action against both McNair and James Dinsmore for the negligent operation of their respective vehicles; (3) a product liability suit against Goodyear, the tire manufacturer, for any discovered defects in the tire(s) which may have contributed to the accident; and (4) a product liability suit against the *Diamante*'s manufacturer Mitsubishi for any defects eventually discovered in the automobile itself.

Following the meeting, Bingle telephoned investigative firm Spahn-Breckinridge to find and photograph the *Diamante*. The *Diamante* was located that afternoon and the following day, Saturday, September 2, 1995, its private investigator (Edmund Rooney) ordered the police report of the accident and visited Highland Towing in Highland, Indiana where he photographed the wrecked *Diamante* and left his business card with instructions to contact him if anyone sought to remove the vehicle. In the meantime, Bingle dictated a memo to the case file that the Firm needed "to check out whether or not we need to get a protective order on the vehicle," that the Firm "need[s] to follow up on this end of aspect [sic] of the case immediately," and that the Firm "may need to file a lawsuit in order to get a protective order."

Bingle opted to enjoy the Labor Day weekend without obtaining the protective order and assigned the case to respondent G. Grant Dixon, III, Esq., ("Dixon"),

an associate at the Firm. Dixon's "to do" list included obtaining a protective order prohibiting anyone, including McFrugal Auto Rental, Mitsubishi or Goodyear, from removing, altering or in any way changing the physical state of the *Diamante* pending its examination by the Firm's experts in order to determine the cause of the accident. By September 12, 1995, investigator Edmund Rooney filed his report of the accident together with photographs he took of the *Diamante*. Rooney noted that there were defects in the automobile's flat right rear tire and that these defects were probably *not* caused by the impact of the collision.

Thereafter, the respondents never obtained the protective order to preserve the *Diamante* and, obviously without the vehicle, failed to engage a forensic auto or tire expert to add to Rooney's rudimentary investigation, analyze the vehicle and determine with scientific probability the cause of the accident. Without a protective order in place, McFrugal, on September 27, 1995, took possession of the vehicle from Highland Towing in Indiana. Thereafter, the vehicle was never located, although a salvage title was issued by the State of Florida in late January of 1996.

Compounding this careless lack of oversight by respondents concerning the whereabouts of the *Diamante* during this crucial period in September, Bingle in September or October lied to Cornelius, the Pinnick's family attorney, telling him that the vehicle actually had been "checked out and that there was no issue with the vehicle." As part of this subterfuge, Bingle denied Cornelius' offer to take over the case, preventing Cornelius from examining file documents

showing none of respondents had secured the automobile or obtained an expert forensic analysis of the *Diamante* or its tires before it was taken by McFrugal and then destroyed. Bingle's lie that the vehicle had "checked out" was made while simultaneously respondent Dixon had his investigative firm scouring Illinois Mitsubishi dealerships for the *Diamante* or a replacement, a search which continued until the Circuit Court dismissed the case three years later.

On November 29, 1995, the Firm's Dixon on behalf of petitioners filed suit in the federal district court for the Northern District of Indiana against James Dinsmore based upon his negligent operation of his vehicle. The suit proceeded for three years until on December 9, 1998, the district judge dismissed petitioners' complaint as a sanction for the Firm's "lengthy pattern of discovery abuses" and its failure to abide by the trial judge's discovery orders.

In the wake of this dismissal in federal court, petitioners sued respondents Corboy & Demetrio, P.C., Bingle and Dixon in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, for spoliation of evidence under Count I; legal malpractice under Counts II through V; and for fraudulent concealment under Count VI in lying and failing "to inform [the petitioners] that they had neglected to perform an investigation of the car or its tires for the purpose of pursuing claims against Mitsubishi, Goodyear or McFrugal."

The State trial court entered summary judgment against petitioners on Count I's spoliation claim because it ruled, after melding the spoliation count into

the product liability counts, Counts III-V, there was no duty to secure and on all the legal malpractice claims except Count II for lack of proof. It dismissed Count VI's fraudulent concealment claim because it could not be proven independent of any legal malpractice claim. As for Count II, the legal malpractice claim stemming from the dismissal of petitioners' claims against Dinsmore in the Indiana federal district court on account of the Firm's discovery abuses, the Firm at trial admitted liability. However, the trial court granted respondents' motion to cap its liability under this count at \$100,000, Dinsmore's limits of coverage on his automobile policy. On February 12, 2007, a judgment was entered consistent therewith.

Upon petitioners' appeal from these rulings, the Appellate Court for the First Judicial District of Illinois issued its modified order on October 20, 2008, affirming all of the trial court's ruling with minor revisions(App.). Pursuant to Illinois Supreme Court Rule 315, petitioners instituted a Petition for Leave to Appeal to the Supreme Court of Illinois, challenging each and every ruling of the Illinois intermediate appellate court(App. 3-4).

Incident thereto, on November 24, 2008, petitioners moved for the recusal of four (4) of the seven (7) Illinois Supreme Court Justices pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 63(C) and for the appointment of temporary Justices for those who recuse themselves(App. 3-13). Specifically, petitioners claimed that respondent Firm is "the most recognized and renowned plaintiffs' product liability law firm not only in Chicago and Illinois, but throughout the country"(App. 4).

More important, petitioners alleged that the Firm through its attorneys, its experts and its witnesses has exercised pervasive personal and professional influence over the Supreme Court of Illinois by establishing a close, confidential relationship with at least four (4) of the Justices of the Supreme Court (App. 4-5). It has done so by making substantial election campaign contributions----clearly more than the *de minimis* amount requiring disqualification under Illinois Supreme Court Rule 63(C)(1)(d) and (e)(iii)----to some of its Justices:

Specifically, Chief Justice Thomas R. Fitzgerald has received in excess of \$52,000 from [respondent] Bingle and [respondent] Corboy & Demetrio's partners, Philip Corboy, Philip Corboy, Jr., Michael Demetrio and Thomas Demetrio; Justice Charles E. Freeman has received \$5,000 from [respondents] Bingle and Corboy partner Philip Corboy, Jr.; Justice Robert Thomas has received in excess of \$16,000 from [respondents] Bingle and the Corboy partners; and while Justice Ann M. Burke has personally received contributions of only \$1,500, her husband, Edward M. Burke, has received in excess of \$24,000 from [respondents] Corboy partners Thomas Demetrio and Philip Corboy.

(App. 5-6).

In addition, petitioners contended that the Firm's legal experts Robert Clifford of the Clifford Law Offices and Joseph Power of Power Rogers & Smith, P.C., "have contributed substantial amounts to the abovementioned Justices including \$25,000 to

Justice Charles E. Freeman and \$17,000 to Justice Robert Thomas"(App. 6).Besides these campaign contributions, petitioners alleged that Justice Robert Thomas recently received \$7,000,000 in a defamation lawsuit where he was represented by the Firm's legal expert Joseph Power of Power Rogers & Smith, P.C.(*Id.*).

Petitioners concluded that all of these campaign contributions by respondents, well in excess of \$100,000 and sometimes approaching 20% of the total contributions received by a given Justice, together with Justice Thomas' close relationship with the Firm's legal expert Joseph Power of Power Rogers & Smith, P.C., prevent these four Justices from fairly and impartially hearing this appeal(App. 7-8). They accordingly sought their recusal "from hearing any arguments or rendering any decision in this matter including, but not limited to, ruling on [their] Petition for Leave to Appeal and [their] appeal to the Illinois Supreme Court if Leave to Appeal is allowed"(App. 8).

Petitioners argued that the risk that these campaign contributions will compromise the four Justices' ability to fairly or impartially hear this appeal, or have caused their fairness and impartiality to be reasonably questioned in the circumstances, is even more compelling than the risk of bias or prejudgment considered by this Court in the pending case of *Hugh M. Caperton et al. v. A.T. Massey Coal Company, Inc. et al.*, U.S. Supreme Court Docket No. 08-22(App. 7-8).

While the campaign contribution in *Caperton* represented 60% of the appellate judge's total contributions, *only one* appellate judge was affected by

the contributions in that case and there were four (4) other appellate judges who could minimize the taint of prejudice(App. 8). Here, on the other hand, campaign contributions have compromised the ability of *four* of the seven (7) Justices of the Illinois Supreme Court to fairly and impartially consider petitioners' Petition for Leave to Appeal(*Id.*). The resulting imbedded bias of four sitting Justices renders it impossible that petitioners can ever collect the four votes necessary to have their petition for Leave to Appeal granted(*Id.*).

Moreover, in *Caperton*, the campaign contributions were not made by the party itself but rather by its major shareholder and one of its officers(App. 7). Here, however, respondent Corboy & Demetrio, P.C., itself together with respondents Bingle and Dixon as well as its legal experts have *directly* contributed to the four Justices' election campaigns or allied themselves *directly* with these Justices so that their ability to fairly and impartially decide this appeal has been compromised or appears to have been compromised(App. 7-8).

Finally, petitioners asked the Illinois Supreme Court to reconsider its previous decisions holding that it was incapable of appointing or designating temporary substitute Justices to replace any Justice who could not hear an appeal because of a disqualification(App. 9-11). As petitioners argued, if this failure to appoint substitute Justices results in a lack of a quorum to even consider a petition for Leave to Appeal under the Illinois Supreme Court Rules, thus preventing any relief whatsoever for petitioners in a case like this, the resulting lack of an appellate remedy violates the due process clause of the fourteenth amendment to the

federal constitution "and must be found unconstitutional"(App. 11).

On December 22, 2008, the Supreme Court of Illinois denied the petitioners' Motion for Recusal of Supreme Court Justices Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 63(C) and dismissed as moot the petitioners' Motion to Find Limitations of Appointment of Temporary Justices to the Illinois Supreme Court Unconstitutional(App. 1-2 ). With none of its member Justices having recused himself or herself, the Illinois Supreme Court has yet to rule on petitioners' Petition for Leave to Appeal.

On February 3, 2009, following the Illinois Supreme Court's denial of petitioners' Motion for Recusal of Supreme Court Justices Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 63(C), the Illinois State Senate's Executive Committee recommended to the Executive Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments an amendment to the Illinois Constitution Art. VI, § 3, which would allow for temporary appointments to the Illinois Supreme Court when a sitting justice recuses him or herself because of an actual or perceived conflict of interest. The recused justice would be replaced by a judge of the appellate court selected in a random manner to be determined by Supreme Court Rule.

This petition for a writ of certiorari to the Illinois Supreme Court followed.

## REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

**The Illinois State Appellate Proceedings Deny Petitioners Due Process of Law Because They Allow Participation By Appellate Judges Who Receive Substantial Campaign Contributions Directly From the Opposing Party, Circumstances Which Prove The Objective Probability of Actual Bias Or Provide the Basis Upon Which The Judges' Impartiality Might Reasonably Be Questioned.**

*A. The Illinois Supreme Court's Order Denying Recusal By Four of Its Justices Is a Final "Judgment or Decree" by the Highest State Court Which Draws Into Question A Right Claimed Under the Constitution And Its Propriety Is Within The Jurisdiction Of This Court To Review By Writ of Certiorari Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a).*

The relevant statute, 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a), limits this Court's review to "[f]inal judgments or decrees" of the highest State court from which a decision can be had which implicates a right claimed under the federal constitution. *Fort Wayne Books, Inc. v. Indiana*, 489 U.S. 46, 54(1989). To possess the requisite degree of finality for review by this Court, a state-court judgment or decree must be final in two senses: (1) it must be subject to no further review or correction in any other state tribunal; and (2) it must be an effective determination of the litigation and not merely interlocutory or intermediate steps of the litigation. See *Jefferson v. City of Tarrant*, Ala., 522 U.S. 75, 82-83 (1997); *Cox Broadcasting Corp. v. Cohn*, 420 U.S. 469, 479-482(1975).

The decisions of this Court over the years have adopted a flexible, pragmatic approach to the requirement of finality of the state-court judgment or decree sought to be reviewed, especially when "there are further proceedings in the...state courts yet to come." *Cox Broadcasting Corp. v. Cohn*, 420 U.S. at 477. See also *Construction Laborers v. Curry*, 371 U.S. 542, 549(1963); *Mercantile National Bank v. Langdeau*, 371 U.S. 555, 558(1963). These and other cases look beyond the fact that further state-court proceedings are contemplated and instead measure finality by reference to the likely impact of further proceedings on that ruling or on the federal policies at stake. *Mississippi Power & Light Co. v. Mississippi ex rel. Moore*, 487 U.S. 354, 379 n.11(1988).

As this Court has observed, in deciding questions of finality, the most important competing considerations are "the inconvenience and costs of piecemeal review on the one hand and the danger of denying justice by delay on the other." *Dickinson v. Petroleum Conversion Corp.*, 338 U.S. 507, 511(1950) quoting *Gillespie v. United States Steel Corp.*, 379 U.S. 148, 152-153(1964).

Emerging from this decisional law are four distinct rationales, any one of which justifies the conclusion that the Illinois Supreme Court's order denying petitioners' motion for recusal by four of its Justices from hearing petitioners' appeal is a final "judgment or decree" within the jurisdiction of this Court to review by writ of certiorari pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a). They are:

(a) while there may be further State proceedings in the event the Illinois Supreme court eventually grants petitioners' Petition for Leave to Appeal, the order here *conclusively* determines petitioners' federal due process rights in the State court proceeding, leaving any further proceedings in State court irretrievably tainted by the constitutional defect of a lack of due process in these proceedings. Thus regardless of how the Illinois Supreme court ultimately rules on petitioners' Petition for Leave to Appeal or even if it reaches the substantive merits of their appeal, the case is for all practical purposes concluded and the judgment by the Illinois Supreme Court should be deemed final for purposes of 28 U.S.C. §1257(a). *Duquesne Light Co. v. Barasch*, 488 U.S. 299, 306-307(1989). *Cox Broadcasting Corp. v. Cohn*, 420 U.S. at 479. *Mills v. Alabama*, 384 U.S. 214, 217-218(1966);

(b) regardless of the outcome of any future proceedings in the Illinois Supreme Court, its resolution of the federal due process question as the highest State court survives as an important federal question on its own, requiring a timely decision by this Court. *Cox Broadcasting Corp. v. Cohn*, 420 U.S. at 480-481. *Brady v. Maryland*, 373 U.S. 83, 85 n.1(1963). *Radio Station WOW v. Johnson*, 326 U.S. 120, 124-127(1945). That is, the Illinois Supreme Court's determination that four of its seven members are able to hear petitioners' appeal fairly and impartially even though they have accepted substantial campaign contributions from---and have close personal relationships with--- petitioners' adversaries is a question considered separate and apart from any subsequent proceedings in State court, so much so that the federal issue is unaffected and undiluted by the

later State court proceedings. Thus for all practical purposes, the ruling on the federal issue is a final judgment or decree by the highest State court under 28 U.S.C. §1257(a). *Id.* See also *American Export Lines, Inc. v. Alvez*, 446 U.S. 274, 278 n.7(1980);

(c) this is among the small class of cases "which finally determine claims of right separable from, and collateral to, rights asserted in the action, too important to be denied immediate review by the Court and too independent of the cause itself to require that appellate consideration be deferred until the whole case is adjudicated." *Construction Laborers v. Curry*, 371 U.S. at 548-549 quoting *Cohen v. Beneficial Indus. Loan Corp.*, 337 U.S. 541, 546(1949)(giving the analogous finality requirements of 28 U.S.C. § 1291 "a practical rather than a technical construction."). Accord, *National Socialist Party v. Skokie*, 432 U.S. 43, 44(1977). Petitioners' right to a fair and impartial appellate tribunal----a core right to due process in the State appellate forum---is too important to be denied immediate vindication in the Supreme Court and too independent of the cause itself to require that all appellate proceedings be exhausted before this Court's review is undertaken; or

(d) this is a case where the subsequent State proceedings *would themselves* deny the federal right for the vindication of which review is sought in the Supreme Court. *Chapman v. California*, 405 U.S. 1020, 1022(1972)(Douglas, J., dissenting) citing *Colombo v. New York*, 405 U.S. 9, 10-11(1972) and *Harris v. Washington*, 404 U.S. 55, 56(1971). See *Helstoski v. Meanor*, 442 U.S. 500, 506(1979). For the Illinois Supreme Court to proceed to consider petitioners' Petition for Leave to Appeal or the merits of the appeal itself with the participation of four Justices who have

accepted substantial campaign contributions from----and have close personal relationships with----petitioners' adversaries denies petitioners' their right to due process in the form of a fair and impartial appellate tribunal, renders the Illinois appellate proceedings a sham, and reinforces the unconstitutional taint *already* present in these State court proceedings.

In the final analysis, petitioners' right to an appellate tribunal which is unbound from the substantial campaign contributions from, and close personal relationships with, one of the parties before it and the partiality and bias which attends such personal relationships and financial support "presents a serious and unsettled question," *Cohen v. Beneficial Loan Corp.*, 337 U.S. at 547, which is "fundamental to the further conduct of the case." *United States v. General Motors Corp.*, 323 U.S. 373, 377(1945). Moreover, the question of whether these four Justices should recuse themselves is "independent of, and unaffected by" further State court proceedings. *Radio Station WOW v. Johnson*, 326 U.S. at 126. Nor will further State court proceedings moot this important federal question and the crucial federal right at risk in these proceedings. *Brady v. Maryland*, 373 U.S. at 85 n.1. *Construction Laborers v. Curry*, 371 U.S. at 549. In these circumstances, this Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a), to review by writ of certiorari the Illinois Supreme Court's order denying recusal.

#### *B. The Due Process Deprivation.*

More so than *Caperton*, this petition raises fundamental issues of due process: (1) can an appellant receive a fair hearing on appeal where *four* members of

the appellate tribunal receive significant campaign contributions *directly* from---and have close personal ties with---the opposing party, the appellee?; and (2) in these circumstances, have these four affected Justices objectively lost, or have they appeared to lose, their ability to decide petitioners' appeal fairly and impartially so that recusal is warranted as a matter of due process?

Due process requires a neutral and detached judge both at the trial and appellate level. *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 507, 533(2004) quoting *Ward v. Vill. of Monroeville*, 409 U.S. 57, 61-62 (1972). *Withrow v. Larkin*, 421 U.S. 35, 46-47(1975). *In re Murchison*, 349 U.S. 133, 136 (1955). While the trial judge is more than a mere umpire---in fact, he is the governor of the proceedings before him---he cannot become an advocate or otherwise use his judicial powers to advantage or disadvantage a party. *Quercia v. United States*, 289 U.S. 466, 470(1933). Nor "should [he] give vent to personal spleen or respond to a personal grievance." *Offutt v. United States*, 348 U.S. 11, 14(1954). See 28 U.S.C. §§ 455(a) and (b)(1).

In order to safeguard the constitutional right to an impartial judge, "our system of laws has always endeavored to prevent even the probability of unfairness." *In re Murchison*, *supra*. Thus recusal is warranted where there is proof that a judge is actually biased or where an objective inquiry establishes the probability of bias on the judge's part. *Withrow v. Larkin*, 421 U.S. at 47. *Aetna Life Ins. Co. v. Lavoie*, 475 U.S. 813, 825(1986). *Tumey v. Ohio*, 273 U.S. 510, 532(1927). This objective standard avoids requiring a litigant to prove bias or pre-judgment by positive proof,

an almost impossible burden by any measure. See, e.g., *Crawford v. United States*, 212 U.S. 183, 196(1909)(“Bias...might exist in the mind of one...who was quite positive he had no bias.”). Thus where even the appearance of bias is serious enough to create a probability that the judge is actually biased against a litigant, due process requires recusal. *Withrow v. Larkin, supra. In re Murchison, supra.*

This constitutional standard for recusal, i.e., that recusal is required as a matter of due process only when the appearance of partiality is serious enough to generate an objective “probability of actual bias,” *Withrow v. Larkin, supra*, has been supplemented by a more stringent non-constitutional standard expressed in federal law and various state and federal judicial codes, i.e., that recusal is mandated where a judge’s “impartiality might reasonably be questioned.” See 28 U.S.C. §§ 455(a); Illinois Supreme Court Rule 63(C)(1)(“A judge shall disqualify himself or herself in a proceeding in which the judge’s impartiality might reasonably be questioned...”); ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct R. 2.11 (A)(2007)(same).

The questions presented by this petition are:(1) whether the ability of the four Justices here to rule fairly and impartially on petitioners’ appeal is compromised by their close personal and professional relationships with and their acceptance of direct, substantial contributions to their election campaigns or to their spouses from the parties opposing petitioners’ appeal; (2) whether their close personal and professional relationships with and receipt of these substantial contributions directly from a party appearing before it is sufficient to prove an objective

probability of actual bias as a constitutional matter; (3) whether it provides a sufficient basis for reasonably questioning their impartiality under both state and federal judicial codes; and (4) whether this latter, non-constitutional standard should now be "constitutionalized" by this Court so that where circumstances are present from which reasonable persons can reasonably question a judge's impartiality, recusal is warranted as a matter of due process and fundamental fairness. Petitioners submit that each of these questions should be answered in the affirmative.

In the first place, the Court made clear in both *Tumey v. Ohio*, 273 U.S. at 532, and *Aetna Life Insurance Co. v. Lavoie*, 475 U.S. 813, 825(1986), that the ability of the judicial officers there to rule fairly and impartially on the issues before them was fatally compromised by the *possibility* of a financial interest in the outcome of the cases before them. *Id.* In *Lavoie*, the Court determined that it was a violation of due process for a State supreme court justice to participate in the court's review of a verdict of bad-faith refusal to pay an insurance claim because the justice was pursuing his own bad-faith suit against *another insurance company* and the outcome of the case before the court *might* have had a direct effect on the outcome of the justice's case. 475 U.S. at 825. The Court noted that the "possible temptation" suggested by these attenuated facts was enough to conclude that a probability of bias existed sufficient to constitutionally impugn the proceedings. *Id.*

*A fortiori*, members of the Supreme Court of Illinois, charged by statute and by the State constitution with correcting errors in the trial and

intermediate appellate court, who have close personal and professional relationships with and receive direct, substantial financial contributions for their election campaigns or for their spouses from the actual parties appearing before them on appeal face more than the "possible temptation" of having these factors sway their disposition. The facts here are more compelling than the attenuated interest of the supreme court justice in *Lavoie*; they show an objective probability of actual bias by four of the Justices in favor of their friends and close associates, the respondents who made these substantial contributions and against the petitioners on this appeal.

The respondents and their legal experts have given at least \$115,750 to three of the Justices' political committees—\$52,500 for Chief Justice Fitzgerald, \$33,250 for Justice Thomas, \$30,000 for Justice Freeman---as well as \$26,500 to Justice Burke and her husband, City of Chicago alderman Edward Burke who is also Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party's judicial slating committee. He presides over and greatly influences the individuals nominated in Cook County for judicial slating (Chief Justice Fitzgerald, Justice Burke and Justice Freeman are all slated and elected from Cook County).

In addition, the respondent Firm's partners maintain a broad range of personal and professional relationships with members of the State judiciary. The Firm's partners and the Justices of the Supreme Court are frequent invitees at each other's social and professional gatherings and the Firm's partners have served numerous terms as president of various bar associations including the Illinois State Bar Association,

the Chicago Bar Association and the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association as well as presiding over county and state judicial selection and qualification committees.

In this environment, the Justices' receipt of substantial financial contributions directly from a party appearing before it----a party who enjoys an ongoing personal and professional relationship with these same Justices---is sufficient to prove an objective probability of actual bias warranting their recusal as a constitutional matter. These same facts provide a sufficient basis for reasonably questioning their impartiality under both state and federal judicial codes. Recusal was therefore warranted as a matter of due process and fair procedure. *Withrow v. Larkin, supra.* *In re Murchison, supra.*

Finally, this latter, more stringent standard, i.e., that recusal is mandated whenever a judge's "impartiality might reasonably be questioned," should be made a constitutional standard framed by rudimentary due process requirements. When an appellate justice is asked to recuse him or herself, a fair hearing, *not* by the challenged judge, but by an impartial tribunal must be held such that if reasonable persons could reasonably question a judge's impartiality in the circumstances, recusal is objectively determined as a matter of due process and fundamental fairness instead of merely being based upon the recusal candidate's subjective opinion. This independent judicial determination already exists when a substitution of a trial judge for cause is requested pursuant to Illinois Code of Civil Procedure 735 ILCS 5/2-1001(a)(3)(iii), which requires a determination by a

judge other than the one being substituted..

The unmonitored act of assessing dispassionately the worth of an appellate argument can be compromised by financial considerations affecting the Justice's own personal situation. *Aetna Life Insurance Co. v. Lavoie, supra*. Any judge, including an appellate judge, must be scrupulous both to avoid losing his partiality and to maintain his unfamiliarity with disputed matters which may come before him. *In re Murchison*, 349 U.S. at 138. See *Quercia*, 289 U.S. at 470. Thus the new rule should be that an appellate judge as a matter of constitutional law should disqualify himself in a proceeding in which there is shown an objective "probability of actual bias" or where his partiality might reasonably be questioned, including, but not limited to, instances where he has a close personal or professional relationship or a direct, personal or financial connection to a party appearing before him or in the outcome of the appeal.

An appellate judge's refusal to recuse himself in the circumstances here---for whatever reason or rationale---cannot comport with due process. The impropriety of the Justices' refusal to recuse themselves below is exacerbated by their failure to provide any reasons or rationale for their decisions (App. 1-2). By their nature, most recusal motions must rely solely on public facts available about a particular judge. The Justices' refusal to address these public facts with any particularity in their rulings, especially the nature of the respondents' substantial, direct contributions to their respective election campaigns contributes to the public's belief that campaign contributions influence judge's decisions

and its erosion of trust in the judiciary caused by the exorbitant campaign expenditures incurred in state judicial elections. See *Republican Party v. White*, 536 U.S. 765, 790 (2002)(O'Connor, J., concurring).

Indeed, recent research by political scientists at the University of Pittsburgh and Utah State University shows that there is a strong correlation between campaign contributions and decisions by the State Supreme Court judges in states that elect those judges, especially in states where judges are elected in partisan contests (e.g., Michigan and Texas) as opposed to being listed on a nonpartisan ballot (e.g., Nevada). In an environment where numerous attorneys and law firms make campaign contributions, the study found that judges notice those who contribute relatively large sums of money so that when liberal attorneys contribute more money to a judge's election campaign, the likelihood of a liberal decision increases; the same is true for contributions made by conservative attorneys; and the contribution advantage does not have to be that high for the likelihood of victory to increase significantly.

Thus contributions to an appellate judge's election campaign inevitably influence his or her decisionmaking process and a rule which disqualifies a judge in a proceeding in which there is an objective "probability of actual bias" because of such contributions or where his partiality might reasonably be questioned on the same ground, including instances where he has a close personal or professional relationship with a party appearing before him, guarantees a fair hearing and due process.

*C. The Failure of the Illinois Constitutional Scheme To Provide For Temporary or Replacement Judges Denies the Petitioners Due Process.*

If petitioners' motion for recusal of the four Justices of the Illinois Supreme Court had been successful, the Court would have lacked a quorum under Article VI, § 3, of the Illinois Constitution to conduct any further review of this case and because a clear majority of four votes out of seven is necessary to grant petitioners' Petition for Leave to appeal, it would have lacked the power to grant the petitioners' Petition for Leave to Appeal, leaving intact the ruling of the intermediate appellate court and leaving petitioners with no remedy at the highest appellate level in the State.

The solution for this lack of a quorum and lack of a majority would be for the Supreme Court to appoint replacement judges from the other appellate courts in the State to sit for those judges who have recused themselves. However, because the State Supreme Court has twice ruled that it does not have the power under Article VI, § 16, of the Illinois Constitution to appoint replacement judges when recusal takes place, see *PHL, Inc. v. Pullman Bank & Trust Company et al.*, 721 N.E.2d 1119, 1120(Ill. 1999); *Perlman v. First Nat. Bank of Chicago*, 331 N.E.2d 65, 65(Ill.1975), there is no effective remedy in the State constitutional scheme to cure this lack of a quorum or of a majority in the Supreme Court, leaving petitioners permanently without an effective or fair appellate remedy in the State's highest Court.

This incomplete State constitutional scheme for appointing temporary or replacement judges in the event that a Justice of the Supreme Court recuses himself or herself does not pass muster under the federal due process clause applicable to Illinois via the fourteenth amendment and without such substitute Justices, petitioners have been and will be denied a fair hearing on their claims. The Illinois Supreme Court's cramped conception of its own power to appoint replacement judges when recusal occurs does not cure but compounds this constitutional impropriety.

Once it is determined that the Due Process Clause applies to the State court proceedings, "the question remains what process is due." *Cleveland Board of Education v. Loudermill*, 470 U.S. 532, 541(1985) quoting *Morrissey v. Brewer*, 408 U.S. 471, 481(1972). The Court's decision in *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319, 334-335(1976) dictates that the process due in any given instance is determined by weighing "the private interest that will be affected by the official action" against the government's asserted interest, "including the function involved" and the burdens the government would face in providing greater safeguards. *Id.* at 335. The *Mathews* calculus then contemplates a judicious balancing of these concerns, through an analysis of "the risk of an erroneous deprivation" of the private interest if the process were reduced and the "probable value, if any, of additional or substitute procedural safeguards." *Id.* See *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 507, 528-529(2004).

Employing the *Mathews* calculus to the circumstances here in order to balance the petitioners' legitimate private interest in having a meaningful

appellate remedy even if four of the Justices of the Supreme Court recuse themselves against the judicial system's need for efficient administration, the petitioners submit that the process due them consists of the following, as represented by legislation presently being considered by the Illinois General Assembly to amend Article VI, § 3, of the Illinois Constitution:

(b) If a Supreme Court Judge recuses himself or herself in a particular case or matter before the Court because of an actual or potential conflict of interest, then the Judge shall notify the Clerk of the Supreme Court in writing of the recusal. A Judge of the Appellate Court shall then be selected to serve as an Interim Supreme Court Judge to hear that particular or matter until it is resolved or otherwise disposed of by the Court. The Interim Supreme Court Judge shall be selected in a random manner from a pool of Appellate Judges as determined by Supreme Court Rule.

(Senate Constitutional Amendment SJRCA10). Petitioners submit that this the process that is due them under the federal constitution.

## CONCLUSION

For the reasons identified herein, a writ of certiorari should issue to review the Order of the Supreme Court of Illinois denying recusal and, ultimately, to vacate the Order and remand the matter to the Illinois Supreme Court for reconsideration in light of this Court's anticipated decision in *Hugh M. Caperton et al. v. A.T. Massey Coal Company, Inc. et*

*al.*, U.S. Supreme Court Docket No. 08-22; or the Court should decide that as a matter of due process these four Justices were required to recuse themselves from this proceeding once it was shown that the close personal relationships with and substantial contributions to their election campaigns or to their spouses by one of the parties appearing before them created an objective probability that each of these Justices was biased in favor of that party and against petitioners or because these circumstances created a factual backdrop against which their impartiality might reasonably be questioned; and declare that the Illinois Supreme Court's practice of refusing to appoint replacement judges for Justices who recuse themselves denies petitioners due process of law; or provide petitioners with such other relief as is fair and just in the circumstances of this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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(any footnotes trail end of each document)

Filed 12/22/08

No. 107359

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF ILLINOIS

MILVERTHA. PINNICK, et al., Petitioners,

v.

CORBOY & DEMETRIO, P.C., et al., Respondents.

Appeal from Appellate Court, First District 1-07-0533  
Circuit Court Cook County No. 03 L 8525

ORDER

This cause, coming to be heard on the motion of the petitioners for recusal of certain Supreme Court Justices pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 63(C), and to find limitations of appointment of temporary Justices to the Illinois Supreme Court unconstitutional, due notice having been given to respondents, and the court being fully advised in the premises.

Recusal

Because disqualification is a decision that rests exclusively within the determination of the individual judge per Rule 63, each justice named in the recusal portion of the motion has considered the matter and the following represents the decision of each individual justice:

Chief Justice Fitzgerald denies that portion of the motion requesting that he recuse himself from hearing any argument, or rendering any decision in this matter

including, but not limited to, a decision on the pending petition for leave to appeal;

Justice Freeman denies that portion of the motion requesting that he recuse himself from hearing any argument or rendering any decision in this matter including, but not limited to, a decision on the pending petition, for leave to appeal;

Justice Thomas denies that portion of the motion requesting that he recuse himself from hearing any argument or rendering any decision in this matter including, but not limited to, a decision on the pending petition for leave to appeal; and

Justice Burke denies that portion of the motion requesting that she recuse herself from hearing any argument or rendering any decision in this matter including, but not limited to, a decision on the pending petition for leave to appeal.

#### **Limitations on Appointment of Temporary Justices**

Because no individual justice has disqualified himself or herself from participating in this matter, the Court dismisses as moot that portion of the petitioners' motion to find limitations of appointment of temporary Justices to the Illinois Supreme Court unconstitutional.

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11/24/08

No.107359

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF ILLINOIS  
MILVERTHA PINNICK, Guardian and next friend of  
MANNA PINNICK and CORTLAND PINNICK,  
minors, and James Brady, Administrator of the  
ESTATE OF MELISSA PINNICK, deceased,  
Plaintiffs-Petitioners,

vs.

CORBOY & DEMETRIO, P.C., a Professional  
Corporation, ROBERT J. BINGLE, individually and as  
Agent of Corboy & Demetrio, P.C., and G. GRANT  
DIXON, III, Individually and as Agent  
of Corboy & Demetrio, P.C., Defendants-Respondents.

Appeal No: 1-07-533 from the Circuit Court of Cook  
County, Illinois No. 03 L 8525

Hon. William D. Maddux, Hon. Daniel M. Locallo,  
Judges Presiding

PLAINTIFFS-PETITIONERS' MOTION FOR  
RECUSAL OF SUPREME COURT JUSTICES  
PURSUANT TO SUPREME COURT RULE 63(C)  
AND MOTION TO FIND LIMITATIONS OF  
APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY JUSTICES TO  
THE ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT  
UNCONSTITUTIONAL

NOW COMES Plaintiffs-Petitioners ("Plaintiffs"),  
MILVERTHA PINNICK, Guardian and next friend of  
MANNA PINNICK, a minor, CORTLAND PINNICK  
and JAMES BRADY, administrator of the estate of

MELISSA PINNICK, deceased, by their attorney, CHARLES A. BOYLE & ASSOCIATES and respectfully move that certain Justices of this Court recuse themselves pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 63(C) and request that this Honorable Court exercise the authority to appoint temporary Justices to replace those Justices who have recused themselves.

## INTRODUCTION

This legal malpractice case also alleges fraud and involves the law firm of Carboy & Demetrio, the most recognized and renowned plaintiffs' product liability law firm not only in Chicago and Illinois, but throughout the country, and two of its attorneys, managing partner Robert J. Bingle and former associate G. Grant Dixon III (collectively, "Defendants"). On October 10, 2008, Plaintiffs filed a Motion For Extension Of Time To File Petition For Leave To Appeal pending the Appellate Court's Modified Rule 23 Order. On October 20, 2008, the Appellate Court for the First District, First Division in Appeal No. 1-07-533 issued its Modified Rule 23 Order affirming the Circuit Court of Cook County. The Supreme Court allowed Plaintiffs' Motion for Extension of Time on October 21, 2008, granting Plaintiffs until November 24, 2008, to file their Petition for Leave to Appeal. Concurrently with this Motion, Plaintiffs have timely filed their Petition for Leave to Appeal pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 315(a).

Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 63(C) and as a result of the plentiful personal and professional influence exerted by Defendants on the Illinois judiciary, particularly judicial elections, several Justices should

recuse themselves from deliberating on Plaintiffs' Petition for Leave to Appeal. This stems from the close and confidential relationships between Defendants and several Justices, Defendants' frequent invitations to Justices to participate in social gatherings<sup>1</sup>, home and office visits and substantial financial contributions made by Defendants, their partners, associates, employees, and their legal experts to the campaigns of several Justices and their spouses. Plaintiffs respectfully request that this is an appropriate time for this Honorable Court to reconsider its prior holding in PHL, Inc. v. Pullman Bank & Trust Co., 86100, 721 N.E.2d 1119 (1999), as unconstitutional under the Due Process Clause of the XIV Amendment to the Constitution of the United States and appoint temporary justices to sit in the recused Justices stead.

I. It is improper for the Honorable Chief Justice Thomas R. Fitzgerald, the Honorable Justice Charles E. Freeman, the Honorable Justice Robert R. Thomas and the Honorable Justice Anne M. Burke to hear this matter as all Justices or their spouses have received campaign contributions well in excess of \$10,000 from Defendants or Defendants' counsel, experts and witnesses.

Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 63(C), a judge shall disqualify himself in a proceeding in which the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned. Several Justices currently seated on the Court have received substantial contributions from Defendants or their trial counsel, their experts and their witnesses. These contributions are substantially more than the de minimis interest requiring disqualification pursuant to Rule 63(C)(i)(d),(e)(iii). Specifically, Chief Justice

Thomas R. Fitzgerald has received in excess of \$52,000<sup>2</sup> from Defendant Bingle and Defendant Corboy & Demetrio's partners, Philip Corboy, Philip Corboy, Jr., Michael Demetrio and Thomas Demetrio; Justice Charles E. Freeman has received \$5,000 from Defendant Bingle and Corboy partner Philip Corboy, Jr.; Justice Robert Thomas has received in excess of \$16,000 from Defendant Bingle and the Corboy partners; and while Justice Anne M. Burke has personally received contributions of only \$1,500, her husband, Edward M. Burke has received in excess of \$24,000 from Corboy partners Thomas Demetrio and Philip Corboy. In addition to these amounts, Defendant's legal experts Robert Clifford of the Clifford Law Offices and Joseph Power of Power Rogers & Smith, P.C. have contributed substantial amounts to the abovementioned Justices including \$25,000 to Justice Charles E. Freeman and \$17,000 to Justice Robert Thomas.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the contributions received by the Justices, Justice Robert Thomas recently was awarded \$7,000,000 in a defamation lawsuit in which he was represented by Defendants' legal expert Joseph Power of Power Rogers & Smith, P.C. and Justice Thomas Kilbride, who does not appear to have received direct campaign contributions from Defendants, has recently recused himself from several appeals involving product liability due to his pending case involving a bicycle injury. The underlying cases are product liability.

The issue of when campaign contributions raise an issue of bias regarding the judiciary's legitimacy and efficacy which affects the public's confidence in the fairness and fidelity of the law is an issue of first impression for the

Illinois Supreme Court. Currently, as reported on November 17, 2008, this exact issue is pending before the United States Supreme Court in the case *Caperton v. Massey Coal Co.*, No. 08-22. *Caperton*, certiorari granted on appeal from the West Virginia Supreme Court, involves one West Virginia Supreme Court Justice who was the swing vote in reversing a large jury award against a defendant whose officer and shareholder was a substantial contributor to the Justices' campaign.

The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly referenced the importance of the public's confidence in the fidelity of the law. See, e.g. *Alden v. Maine*, 527 U.S. 706, 752 (1999) (a state court's "legitimacy derives from fidelity to the law"); *Mistretta v. United States*, 488 U.S. 361, 407 (1989) ("The legitimacy of the Judicial Branch ultimately depends on its reputation for impartiality and nonpartisanship."); *Valley Forge Christian College v. Americans United for Separation of Church & State, Inc.*, 454 U.S. 464, 474 (1982) ("public confidence [is] essential" to the judicial branch) (quoting *United States v. Richardson*, 418 U.S. 166, 188 (1974)(Powell, J., concurring)).

Although the percentages contributed by Defendants are significantly less than the 60% claimed in *Caperton*, the facts underlying the contributions in the instant case are even more compelling to require the recusal of Justice Burke, Justice Roberts, Justice Freeman and Chief Justice Fitzgerald. In *Caperton*, the contributions were not made directly by the defendant, Massey Coal Co., but rather by a major shareholder and officer of the defendant. In the instant case, the contributions were made directly by Defendants. Furthermore, in

Caperton only one justice of the West Virginia Supreme Court was alleged to have received substantial contributions from the defendant's officer. Thus, the plaintiffs had the ability to win the support of three of the remaining four West Virginia Supreme Court Justices and succeed in their suit. In the instant suit four of the seven Illinois Supreme Court Justices have received contributions or have other relations with Defendants and their experts. Thus, unlike Caperton where, irrespective of the bias of the Chief Justice, the plaintiffs retained a 75% chance of succeeding in their appeal, in the instant suit, to have their Petition for Leave to Appeal granted Plaintiffs must receive four votes, an impossibility with the imbedded bias of four sitting Justices. See Ill. Const. art. VI, § 3.

The substantial financial contributions, well in excess of \$100,000 and occasionally approaching 20% of the total contributions, made by Defendants and Justice Thomas' relationship with Defendant's expert, Joseph Power, present grave issues regarding the Justices ability to render an impartial decision in this matter.

With the appearance of impartiality, Plaintiffs respectfully petition Justice Anne M. Burke, Chief Justice Thomas R. Fitzgerald, Justice Charles E. Freeman and Justice Robert R. Thomas to recuse themselves from hearing any arguments or rendering any decision in this matter including, but not limited to, ruling on Plaintiffs' Petition for Leave to Appeal and Plaintiffs' Appeal to the Illinois Supreme Court if Leave to Appeal is allowed.

II. The Supreme Court must reconsider its previous holdings finding itself incapable of appointing or designating by lottery temporary substitute Justices to replace Justices who have recused themselves.

Supreme Court vacancies, although infrequent, do occur and are routinely filled with exceptional lawyers and judges of integrity and intellect. Most recently, Justice Anne Burke was appointed by the Court to fill the unexpired term of the retiring Justice Mary Ann McMorrow. It is respectfully suggested that the Court consider a fair and impartial mechanism to make appointments preserving the seven member panel for its critical consideration of petitioners Petition for Leave to Appeal.

The Supreme Court has twice been asked to interpret Article VI, § 16 of the Illinois Constitution of 1970. In both Perlman v. First Nat'l Bank of Chicago, 60 Ill.2d 529 (1975), and PHL, Inc. v. Pullman Bank & Trust Co., 86100, 721 N.E.2d 1119 (Ill.1999), this Honorable Court has held that it may not temporarily appoint replacement Justices for the Supreme Court when Justices are required to recuse themselves from considering a case. In his dissent in Perlman, Chief Justice Underwood deliberated over several scenarios which might be rectified if the Supreme Court were to interpret Article VI, § 16 to empower the Supreme Court to appoint temporary replacements when the Supreme Court is incapable of reaching the required four votes. Perlman, 60 Ill. 2d at 530. Plaintiffs deplore the forfeiture of just one recusal without replacement and the obvious inequity and injustice it creates.<sup>4</sup>

A scenario much more compelling than those contemplated by the former Chief Justice is presented here. In § I of this motion Plaintiffs have identified four Justices who received substantial campaign contributions from Defendants and their counsel, experts and witnesses and have been represented by Defendants' experts. The recusal of these Justices results in only three Justices competent to consider Plaintiffs' Petition for Leave to Appeal. Unlike Perlman and PHL, where at least four Justices remained to satisfy the requirements of Article VI, § 3 of the Constitution, in this case even if all non-recused Justices vote to grant Plaintiffs' Petition for Leave to Appeal, Plaintiffs would not obtain the required four votes. This is not only an absurd result, but also a violation of Plaintiffs' Due Process rights under the XIV Amendment of the United States Constitution.

The XIV Amendment of the United States Constitution mandates that individuals receive Due Process rights in dealing with states, The United States Supreme Court has held that a fair trial in a fair tribunal is a basic requirement of due process and that fairness requires an absence of actual bias in the trial of cases. *In re Murchison*, 349 U.S. 133, 136, 75 S. Ct. 623 (1955). *In re Murchison*, although referring to a criminal trial proceeding, further held, "every procedure which would offer a possible temptation to the average man as a judge ... not to hold the balance nice, clear and true between the state and the accused, denies the latter due process of law." *Id.*

The holding of *In re Murchison* is relevant to the instant matter. If required to obtain the necessary four votes with less than seven sitting Justices, not only will

Plaintiffs face a drastic diminution of the odds, but will tragically receive no due process when four Justices elect to recuse themselves in compliance with Illinois Supreme Court Rule 63(C). The paradox is exacerbated without the requisite panel of seven; because the individual Justices' abstentions effectively bar Plaintiffs a fair and equitable hearing on their rightful and legitimate Petition for Leave to Appeal.

The present interpretation of Article VI of the Illinois Constitution of 1970 by this Court violates the Due Process clause of the XIV Amendment of the United States Constitution and must be found unconstitutional. Defendants' campaign contributions to the four named Justices effectively purchase Defendants a victory in the Illinois Supreme Court. Four recusals are tantamount to four votes for Defendants. This Court must demonstrate its independence by revisiting its previous decisions as opined in the concurring and dissenting opinions of Perlman and PHL or find that either Article VI, § 3 requiring a quorum and vote of four Justices or Article VI, § 16, limiting the Supreme Court's ability to replace recused Justices, is unconstitutional under the Due Process Clause of the XIV Amendment to the United States Constitution.

We respectfully suggest the court implements the procedure for appointment of Justices upon the resignation or death as most recently employed in the appointment of Justice Anne Burke to replace Justice Mary Ann McMorrow.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs respectfully request that pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 63(C), all Justices who have received campaign contributions from Defendants

or their counsel, legal experts or witnesses recuse themselves from deliberating in this matter and that this Honorable Court reconsider its opinions in Perlman and PHL and find that the Illinois Supreme Court has the authority under Article VI, §§ 3, 16 of the Illinois Constitution of 1970 to replace Justices for whom recusal is necessary with suitable temporary appointments in order to guarantee all parties before this Court Equal Protection of the laws and Due Process by having a full seven Justice panel consider Plaintiffs' Petition for Leave and all other matters in the instant appeal.

#### Footnote

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Corboy, as special counsel to the Illinois Democratic Party, has for years hosted parties to which several members of the Illinois Supreme Court are frequent invitees.

<sup>2</sup>The dollar amount of campaign contributions is derived solely from contributions from Philip Corboy, Philip Corboy, Jr., Tom Demetrio, Michael Demetrio, Robert J. Bingle, Robert Clifford and Joseph Power.

<sup>3</sup>Plaintiffs' counsel, Charles A. "Pat" Boyle, acknowledges he has made contributions to several of the above mentioned Justices, typically \$500 or less for benefit dinners and similar fundraising events.

<sup>4</sup>A quorum of less than seven Justices is inequitable. The percentage of the quorum needed to achieve the mandatory four votes granting a Petition for Leave to Appeal disproportionately diminishes when Justices

recuse themselves without appointment of temporary Justices.

Four mandatory votes out of seven Justices: 57% of the quorum required.

Four mandatory votes out of six Justices: 67% of the quorum required.

Four mandatory votes out of five Justices: 80% of the quorum required.

Four mandatory votes out of four Justices: 100% of the quorum required.

Any number of justices less than four would render an impossibility of granting motions.